

The supposed eggs of this species described by Dr. T. M. Brewer (see Capen's 'Oology of New England,' pl. xix. fig. 6) and Dr. Clark ('The Auk,' Oct. 1898, p. 328) were found in nests on the ground, and do not in the slightest degree resemble those now recorded. It certainly is a most remarkable fact that the eggs of a bird of such wide distribution on the North-American Continent as *Totanus solitarius* should have so long escaped the observation of American naturalists, and the thanks of ornithologists are due to Mr. Raine for his enterprise in making them known.

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XV.—*A Trip to the Forest of Marmora, Morocco.*

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IN the spring of 1902 an opportunity occurred of visiting the Forest of Marmora, in Northern Morocco. I had wished to make this excursion many times before, as I had seen the forest when passing from Mehedia to Rabat, but it had always been considered impossible, owing to the bad character of the inhabitants. However, we made friends with a certain Sheik who had considerable influence on the borders of the forest, and he said that if we would put ourselves under his protection he would see that we were not "carried off," but that we should have to be very careful. This Moor, by name Bourzama, treated us uncommonly well, but took such care of us that we were never out of his sight or that of his dozen attendants. Moreover, although we could go where we liked in the forest to search, we could not shoot in it for fear of letting the brigands know where we were. Indeed our Sheik would not even let us sit down to eat our lunch without holding our loaded guns across our knees. But, in spite of these little difficulties, we spent several most enjoyable and interesting days in the forest. I was able to collect a certain number of insects, and had also admirable opportunities of watching the habits of the magnificent

\* For the author's previous notes on the birds of Morocco, see 'Ibis,' 1903, p. 196.

Bustard (presumably *Eupodotis arabs*\*) that is common throughout its extent.

Before I proceed further, however, some description of the kind of ground that we traversed may be of interest, as no European, I believe, has ever visited the district before (at least not of his own free will), and it appears to be the only large tract of woodland still left in Northern Morocco.

The Forest of Marmora lies between the Rivers Sebou and Bau-reg-reg, and is in H'mar: it is bounded on the east by the Zemmoor, on the south-east by the Zair, both these tribes being rebels against the Sultan's rule, and not acknowledging the Sultan's or, indeed, any law. In their own country they are, almost to a man, robbers and brigands. The wooded district is of considerable extent: it is about twenty-five miles in width where it comes nearest to the sea, from which it is only some dozen miles distant. Our host told us that it took about two days to get through it going eastward, and also that it widened out considerably. Our headquarters were at a tent-village called Ensár, Kabila Amar, on the edge of the forest. The country is low and undulating, not, I should say, more than from 200 to 400 feet above sea-level. The timber is continuous, closely dotted about in some parts and forming thickets in others. There are some small open spaces where there have evidently been conflagrations, for numbers of the trees shewed signs of fire. There are a few marshy tracts, but most of the ground that I went over was very dry. I saw no really fine timber anywhere, but my host told me that in some places further in there were some very fine cork-trees. The timber consisted principally of the cork-oak (*Quercus suber*), the belloot oak (*Quercus bellooti*), and a kind of wild pear-tree; the more open parts were covered with a dense growth of brooms of various

\* [There can be little doubt, we think, that the large Bustard of the Marmora Forest is *Eupodotis arabs*. Mr. Drake obtained a specimen of this species at Dar-el-baida, on the west coast of Morocco ('Ibis,' 1867, p. 429), and there is an example of it in the British Museum from Mogador (*Capt. Taylor*). See also Irby's 'Ornithology of the Straits of Gibraltar,' p. 260 (1895).—EDD.]

kinds. This was the general appearance of the ground that I saw, but I do not think that we penetrated more than about ten miles into the forest. It was my intention to pay other visits to this new hunting-ground, and I hoped to be able to do some collecting there, but the state of the country everywhere in the north of Morocco has become so disturbed that it will probably be a long time before there is any possibility of visiting it in safety. Hence this short notice of what I saw in 1902. Birds were not particularly numerous; most of the country was very dry, and there was no great variety of vegetation. I was surprised not to see (or hear) a Jay. Jays may be there, and they are usually very quiet in the spring, but they are mountain-birds in Morocco, and this district may have been at too low an elevation for them. I did not see the Moorish Magpie, but I have never met with it anywhere north of Rabat. Yet the Great Spotted Cuckoo (*Coccyzus glandarius*) was particularly common and very noisy, but, the time being very early in April, it was probably only passing on migration. I never actually saw any Guinea-fowl, but we heard their cries repeatedly, and were told that there were plenty of them in Zair. I have received living examples of the Guinea-fowl (*Numida meleagris*) thence, and also of the Two-spurred Francolin (*Francolinus bicalcaratus*). We heard the latter call, but could not put it up from the dense bramble-brakes. The Moorish Pied Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos mauritanicus*) was extremely common in the forest, but we did not see or hear the Green Woodpecker. The Little Bustard (*Otis tetrax*) abounded in all the open spaces on the outskirts of the forest, but we did not see or hear any in the interior. It was different, however, with a large Bustard (presumably *Eupodotis arabs*), and this splendid bird was, to me at least, the most interesting object that we met with. It was fairly common all through the forest, not frequenting, perhaps, the thickest timber, but met with everywhere else. I fancied that it rather favoured the tops of the low elevations. It was surprising how this enormous

bird managed to keep out of the way, where there was so much dense covert ; but it nearly always rose on the further side of a thick tree, and then, flying at a considerable height over the top of the forest, glided round the shoulder of some low hill and settled again after about a mile's flight. The birds were seen both singly and in pairs, and on one occasion I noticed five together. By far the greater number appeared to be males. I occasionally saw them walking under the tall trees, where the undergrowth was thin, when, if we approached too near for their liking, they would hurry away to an open place and rise very lightly. The flight was far lighter and more buoyant than that of *Otis tarda*. The call of this Bustard is a curious sound, like two big bubbles of a water-bottle, "*pah, pah.*" On one occasion I managed to slip away and stalk a fine male that was shewing off and calling in some thistles. But very soon after I was missed—in less than five minutes—the escort came galloping all over the place looking for me, shouting and brandishing their long guns ! It was hopeless to do anything under these circumstances.

Birds-of-Prey were fairly common in the forest, but the only sight of special interest to me was a pair of Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaëtus*) that had a nest in the top of a cork-tree. I was able to identify these birds with certainty, as, for Golden Eagles, they were particularly tame. I got within forty yards of both of them, and could see that they were dark-coloured and, as I thought, small in size. They were fully adult, not shewing a trace of white in the tail. The Serpent-Eagle (*Circaëtus gallicus*) was common in the forest, and I saw two pairs of Bonelli's Eagle (*Nisaëtus fasciatus*). I did *not* see the Red Kite, which is here a mountain-bird, but the Black Kite was always *en évidence*. The Bald Ibis (*Comatibis eremita*) was very numerous on the downs at the edge of the forest. It used to pass over and alight on the open spaces where there had been fires. It was breeding in numbers in the Sallee cliffs, but was much later this year than in 1901.